

THE CITY OF BRIDGEPORT PREPARES FOR HURRICANE SEASON

Winds over 100 miles per hour, severe flooding, the loss of electricity or other essential services. Every year Hurricane Season begins June 1st and ends on November 30th, and this year like every year the City of Bridgeport Emergency Operations Center (EOC) began preparations in making sure the community is prepared for, alerted to and can recover from any potential Hurricane or Coastal Storm.

The City of Bridgeport Emergency Operations Center began monitoring the Tropics on June 1st by analyzing data and reports provided by the National Hurricane Center and the National Weather Service. Like every day of the year the City of Bridgeport's EOC maintains constant communications with the State of Connecticut Emergency Operations Center and other local coastal emergency centers in making sure that if a Hurricane were to impact the State our area is prepared.

Over the past years, lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina and other storms have initiated some new protective measures and planning directives. The Bridgeport EOC is participating in the development of a Regional Evacuation Plan and other Emergency Plans so that the 8 Coastal Communities (Greenwich, Stamford, Darien, Norwalk, Westport, Fairfield, Bridgeport and Stratford) and the 6 Inland Communities (New Canaan, Wilton, Weston, Easton, Trumbull and Monroe) in Southwestern Fairfield County are all on the same sheet of music and working together.

Here in the City, we are beginning measures by working in conjunction with our Health Department and all local Health and Medical providers in trying to identify all Specific Needs Populations that are located in Flood or Hurricane Zones that would be in need of special assistance if evacuations were ordered.

The City of Bridgeport EOC has updated the HURREVAC System and has begun preparing worst-case scenarios on Hurricane impacts on the City. HURREVAC is a Hurricane decision and planning assistance tool offered by the U.S. Homeland Security, FEMA, US Army Corps of Engineers and NOAA. The Bridgeport EOC has had this system in place for over 5 years now.

The City of Bridgeport Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security continues its efforts in providing All Hazards preparedness seminars and All Hazards emergency preparedness brochures for local neighborhoods and businesses in making sure everyone knows what to do and who to call in the event of an emergency. To date over 60 seminars have taking place with over 5,000 brochures distributed community wide this year alone.

The main concern about Hurricane Season is the flooding and wind damage. Over the past few months the City of Bridgeport has experienced some severe flooding from seasonal storms that has caused property, vehicles, basements and personal belongings to be damaged not only to home and business owners in flood zones but to others outside those zones. Although actions are currently being taken by the City and the our Delegation to request State and Federal assistance to help mitigate these issues for the future, being ready for disasters is up to everyone.

That is why we are urging everyone to continue their preparedness efforts now in these months of August through October (our region's peak time) for the possibility of more Atlantic Storms. Although we haven't had a major impact from a Hurricane since 1985 (Hurricane Gloria) and 1999 (Tropical Storm Floyd), seasonal storms inundating our community with rainfall amounts of up to 6 inches in an 18hr timeframe and 20-40mph sustained winds with gusts up to 50mph will be nothing compared to 100-130mph sustained winds and 10 to 20 inches of rainfall.

We can replace property we cannot replace lives!

Before A Hurricane:

- Know your community's flood and hurricane zones.
- Prepare Disaster supply kits and family plans, including a communication plan in the event you are separated.
- Keep tuned to local media for emergency instructions and reports.
- Make sure to contact your insurance provider to find out if your property is covered by flood and Hurricane insurance. If you are a renter or a college student living in a dorm we recommend purchasing Renters Insurance to cover any loss or damages.
- Plan a location that you, your family and your pet(s) will go in the event an evacuation is ordered. Remember emergency shelters do not allow pets due to health regulations.
- Bring in all outside furniture or tie them down.
- Board up or tape all windows, if possible.
- Remove all valuable or documents from the basement area and place them in the higher levels of your property.
- Make sure you have enough money, gas in your vehicle and all pertinent medications if ordered to evacuate or shelter in place.
- Make arrangements with your health and medical provider if you or your family has any Special Needs for evacuation options or alternate locations, if evacuation is ordered.
- Emergency evacuation routes, evacuation times and emergency shelter locations will be disseminated to those areas at risk prior to a Hurricane so listen to your local media for emergency instructions and alerts.

During a Hurricane

- Stay indoors if not ordered to evacuate your area or home.
- Do not get fooled by the calm of the wind, it could be the eye of the storm and winds will come again.
- Avoid using the telephone except for emergencies only. This will help keep lines open for others in need of assistance.
- If ask to do so, shut off all utilities for the safety of you, your family and emergency responders.
- Be aware of storm surges. Flooding may develop quickly, so prepare to evacuate if flooding begins to take place in your area.

After a Hurricane

- Local emergency officials will instruct the community if it is safe to reenter your area or home.
- If your area has been damaged, local officials will instruct you and your family on what to do, who to call and where to go.
- If allowed to go back to your home, remove all valuables and assemble a damage assessment of your home and property by taking pictures, video and writing descriptions.
- Contact a family member or friend if your home is unlivable to see if you can stay with them or assistance will be provided.

We know that disaster preparedness works and we know that disasters can strike at any time. We all have a personal responsibility to be ready and as the Mayor of the City of Bridgeport our Emergency Operations Center Team will be ready.

When you are prepared, you become part of the solution! Stay safe.

Mayor Bill Finch,
City of Bridgeport

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City of Bridgeport